

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4602
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMCONSUL BREMEN
AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMCONSUL STUTTGART
USMISSION BERLIN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 HAMBURG 308

E. O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, GW
SUBJECT: JUNE 4 LAND ELECTIONS IN HAMBURG AND LOWER SAXONY

1. SUMMARY: THE FIRST TWO LANDTAG ELECTIONS SINCE THE
FEDERAL ELECTION IN OCTOBER 1976 WILL TAKE PLACE IN
HAMBURG AND LOWER SAXONY ON JUNE 4. THE SPD IS ODDS-ON
TO ACHIEVE AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY IN HAMBURG, WITH THE
CDU POSSIBLY DOING THE SAME IN LOWER SAXONY. OF PARTI-
CULAR NATIONAL IMPORTANCE WILL BE THE SIZE OF THE FDP'S
EXPECTED LOSSES IN HAMBURG AND WHETHER OR NOT IT STAYS
ABOVE THE CRITICAL 5 PERCENT IN LOWER SAXONY. END SUMMARY.

2. THE ISSUES: THE THREE MAJOR PARTIES CONTESTING THE
JUNE 4 ELECTIONS IN HAMBURG AND LOWER SAXONY ARE, IN
GENERAL, IN AGREEMENT ON THE LARGE ISSUES OF THE DAY:
I.E., ALL ARE FOR "SAFE" NUCLEAR ENERGY, ALL FEAR
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INFLATION MORE THAN UNEMPLOYMENT, ALL WISH TO SEE THE
SOCIAL SECURITY FUND FINANCIALLY SOUND, AND ALL
SUPPORT NATO, HUMAN RIGHTS, DETENTE, ETC.

3. THE DIFFERENCES IN EMPHASIS ON THESE MAJOR THEMES
ARE, FOR THE MOST PART, TOO SUBTLE TO BE DECISIVE IN

DETERMINING THE OUTCOME, SO THE GENERAL MOOD AND PERSONALITIES ARE PLAYING UNUSUALLY IMPORTANT ROLES, WITH THE CDU CAMPAIGNING AGAINST THE DANGEROUS "DREAMERS OF THE LEFT" IN HAMBURG AND STRESSING THE PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES OF MINISTER PRESIDENT ALBRECHT IN LOWER SAXONY.

4. THERE ARE THE USUAL NUMBER OF VAPID SLOGANS -- E.G., THE SPD'S "WE MUST DO MORE FOR EIMSBUETTEL*" OR THE FDP'S "WE SAID IT* WE DID IT*" -- BUT FOR THE MOST PART THEY ARE TOO SOMNOLENT EVEN TO INCITE GRAFFITI. THE SPD AND THE FDP ARE CASTING WORRIED LOOKS AT THE "GREEN LIST," A HODGE-PODGE OF SERIOUS OPPONENTS TO NUCLEAR ENERGY PLUS A SCATTERING OF DOTTIER TYPES, BUT IF IT IS TO BE A FORMIDABLE SPLINTER ON JUNE 4 THE CURRENT POLLS DON'T BETRAY IT.

5. THE MOOD'S THE THING AND THE MOOD IS DETERMINED EVEN MORE BY BONN THAN IS USUAL AND THAT BODES ILL, AT LEAST RIGHT NOW IN LOWER SAXONY, FOR THE SPD, IN PART BECAUSE THE "INS" IN BONN USUALLY SUFFER WHEN THE PROVINCES GO TO THE POLLS. BUT THE SPECIFIC BITS AND PIECES OF THE NATIONAL SCENE ARE NOT GOING TO HELP THE SPD EITHER -- THE EUPHORIA OVER MOGADISCHU IS LONG OVER, GERMANY'S UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IS HIGH AND NOT GETTING PERCEPTIBLY SMALLER, THE GOVERNMENT LOOKED CLUMSY IN BOTH THE PREMATURE CABINET SHUFFLE AND IN THE ONE-VOTE MAJORITY BY WHICH IT JUST MANAGED TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SAVE THE ANTI-TERRORIST LEGISLATION THE SPD HAD ALREADY SOFTENED TO APPEASE ITS LEFT-WING, THE GNP GROWTH RATE IS STILL BELOW 3 PERCENT, THERE IS A GROWING CYNICISM REGARDING THE BENEFITS OF OSTPOLITIK, AND THERE IS NOW A GOOD POSSIBILITY OF SERIOUS LABOR DISPUTES WITH BOTH THE PRINTERS AND METAL WORKERS.

6. HAMBURG

	BUERGERSCHAFT		1976 FEDERAL ELECTION	
	1974	ELECTION	SECOND VOTE PERCENT IN	
	PERCENT	SEATS	HAMBURG	
SPD	44.9	56	52.6	
CDU	40.6	51	35.9	
FDP	10.9	13	10.2	

120

UNPUBLISHED POLLS TAKEN OVER THE PAST THREE MONTHS BY BOTH THE SPD AND THE CDU AGREE THAT THE FDP WILL LOSE HEAVILY -- I.E., 3 TO 4 PERCENTAGE POINTS FROM THEIR

1974 FIGURE -- AND THE CDU SLIGHTLY. IN ANY CASE THE ODDS
ARE QUITE GOOD THAT THE SPD WILL REGAIN THE ABSOLUTE
MAJORITY IT LOST IN 1974. IF IT DOES, THEN IT WILL
NOT EVEN OFFER TO CONTINUE THE COALITION WITH THE FDP,
A PARTY WHICH IN ITS HAMBURG FORM IS BOTH LEFT OF THE SPD AND
BADLY LED. IF IT DOES NOT ACHIEVE AN ABSOLUTE
MAJORITY, THEN THE SPD/FDP COALITION WILL CONTINUE,
DESPITE THE TENSIONS BETWEEN THEM, SIMPLY BECAUSE A
CDU-FDP COALITION IN HAMBURG IS AS CLOSE TO UNTHINKABLE
AS POLITICAL MARRIAGES CAN BE. INDEED, THE FDP HAS
ALREADY ANNOUNCED THAT IT WILL NOT CONSIDER AN OFFER
FROM THE CDU AND WILL CONTINUE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE
SPD ONLY IF THE SPD DOES NOT ACHIEVE AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY.
A GRAND-COALITION MIGHT BE FEASIBLE FROM THE POINT OF
VIEW OF GENERAL POLICY BUT THE POLITICAL POSSIBILITY
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OF ONE IS ZERO BECAUSE OF THE CONSEQUENCES IT WOULD
HAVE IN BONN. CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT COULD HARDLY PERMIT
HIS PARTY IN HIS HOME CITY TO FORM A GOVERNMENT WITH
HIS OPPOSITION IN BONN.

7. THE FDP'S LOCAL PROBLEMS ARE ADEQUATE TO EXPLAIN
THE LOSSES IT NOW SEEMS CERTAIN TO SUFFER, BUT AN ATTEMPT
WILL CERTAINLY BE MADE TO GIVE THEM A NATIONAL SIGNIFIC-
CANCE. THE DEGREE TO WHICH THIS WILL PROVE A VIABLE

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STRATEGY WILL DEPEND IN GREAT PART ON THE PARTY'S
FORTUNES IN LOWER SAXONY.

8. THE CDU LEADERSHIP IN HAMBURG (ERIK BLUMENFELD
AND JUERGEN ECHTERNACH) IS NOT AT ALL CHARISMATIC, AND
BLUMENFELD HAS THE ADDED DISADVANTAGE OF APPEARING
TO BE AN OUTSIDER. HE IS MOST OFTEN HEARD FROM IN
BONN OR STRASSBURG AND THOUGH HE HAS PROMISED TO TAKE
A SEAT IN THE BUERGESCHAFT EVEN IF HE DOES NOT BECOME
FIRST MAYOR, THE LAST TIME HE WAS A MEMBER (AS THE PRESS
QUICKLY POINTED OUT) HE WAS PRESENT FOR ONE SITTING
OUT OF 38 AND ATTENDED NO COMMITTEE MEETINGS AT ALL.

9. THUS THE GREAT LEAP FORWARD ACHIEVED BY THE CDU
FOUR YEARS AGO(FROM 32 PERCENT TO 40.6 PERCENT) WILL
MOST PROBABLY BE FOLLOWED BY MINOR LOSSES THIS YEAR.
AFTER ALL TWO YEARS AFTER THAT ELECTION, WHEN THE CDU/CSU
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ACHIEVED NATIONALLY IN THE FEDERAL ELECTION OF 1976 THE
SECOND LARGEST PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL VOTE -- 48.6
PERCENT -- IT HAS EVER REACHED (ONLY IN 1957 DID IT
SCORE BETTER), THE CDU IN HAMBURG COULD MANAGE ONLY
35.9 PERCENT. A MINOR PROBLEM FOR THE CDU IS HAMBURG'S
CONTINUOUS LOSS OF POPULATION (DOWN SOME 200,000 IN
THE LAST DECADE) TO SUBURBS IN LOWER SAXONY AND
SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN. SINCE THOSE MOVING ARE GENERALLY
IN HIGHER INCOME BRACKETS, IT IS ASSUMED THAT THE CDU
IS HURT MORE BY THIS MIGRATION THAN ARE EITHER OF THE
OTHER TWO MAJOR PARTIES.

10. THE SPD IN HAMBURG IS NOT A MADISON AVENUE DREAM
EITHER, BUT IT IS COMPETENT, WELL ORGANIZED, UNIFIED,
AND HAS ITS PATRON SAINT, HELMUT SCHMIDT, SPEAKING
PLATT DEUTSCH SOMEWHERE IN HAMBURG ALMOST EVERY WEEK-
END (ANOTHER MARK AGAINST BLUMENFELD - HE CAN'T SNACK
PLATT). AND LASTLY, URBAN GERMANY IS GENERALLY PRO-SPD
AND ALL HAMBURG IS URBAN.

11. LOWER SAXONY

1974 LANDTAG ELECTION 1976 FEDERAL ELECTION

PERCENT SEATS SECOND VOTE PERCENT
IN LOWER SAXONY

SPD	43.1	68	45.7
CDU	48.8	76	45.7
FDP	7.0	11	7.9

155

POLITICS SOUTH OF THE ELBE ARE ALMOST A MIRROR IMAGE
OF HAMBURG. HERE ALBRECHT'S CDU SEEMS CERTAIN TO ACHIEVE
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A SMALL BUT ABSOLUTE MAJORITY, WHILE THE FDP IS PERILOUSLY
CLOSE TO THE 5 PERCENT GUILLOTINE AND THE SPD HAS YET
TO UNTRACK ITSELF. THE PICTURE IS EVEN MURKIER THAN IN
HAMBURG FOR THE FURTHER REASON THAT THE POLLS IN LOWER
SAXONY SHOW A HIGHER PERCENTAGE OF UNCOMMITTED VOTERS.

12. IN THE YEAR AND A HALF SINCE THE FDP BROKE THE
HANNOVER COALITION WITH THE SPD AND JOINED FORCES WITH
THE CDU, THE NEW COALITION HAS FUNCTIONED QUITE SMOOTHLY
AND NO NATIONAL POLITICAL FIGURE HAS ACHIEVED THE
GROWTH IN POPULARITY OF MINISTER PRESIDENT ALBRECHT --
A POPULARITY MADE ALL THE MORE IMPRESSIVE BY THE VERY
SMALL NUMBER OF THOSE HOLDING "NEGATIVE" VIEWS IN
SEVERAL RECENT PERSONAL POPULARITY POLLS.

13. WHILE CURRENT POLLS SHOW THE FDP AT 4.5 PERCENT
TO 5.2 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL VOTE, THE TREND, WEAK AS
IT IS, SEEMS TO BE UPWARD. IF THE PARTY CAN MORE OR
LESS HOLD ITS OWN WITH 1974, DESPITE ITS PARTNER-
SWITCH, THEN THE FDP'S LOSSES IN HAMBURG WILL TAKE
ON A NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE. IN ANY CASE THE FDP IN
LOWER SAXONY, LIKE ITS HAMBURG SISTER, WILL NOT CON-
TINUE THE COALITION SHOULD ALBRECHT ACHIEVE AN ABSOLUTE
MAJORITY. THE SPD IS UNDER NEW LEADERSHIP (RAVENS,
UNTEL RECENTLY FEDERAL MINISTER OF HOUSING) BUT THE
STATE OF THE PARTY IN LOWER SAXONY, MUCH OF WHICH IS
RURAL, IS SUCH THAT A DRAMATIC RECOVERY BY JUNE 4 DOESN'T
SEEM TO BE IN THE CARDS.

13. COMMENT: NOT ONLY ARE NATIONAL ISSUES, HOWEVER
VAGUE, AT THE CENTER OF THESE FIRST TWO ELECTIONS, IT
IS WELL UNDERSTOOD THAT THE RESULTS WILL ECHO IN BONN
IMMEDIATELY ONE WAY OR ANOTHER. AS ECHTERNACH PUT IT
WHEN HE WAS RECENTLY RE-ELECTED CHAIRMAN OF THE HAMBURG
CDU: "EACH PERCENTAGE POINT OF THE VOTE WE TAKE FROM
THE SPD SPEEDS UP THE DISSOLUTION OF THE COALITION IN BONN."
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14. IT IS ALSO A TRUISM OF CONTEMPORARY POLITICS THAT IF THE BONN COALITION SURVIVES THIS YEAR IT WILL LAST TO THE FEDERAL ELECTIONS SCHEDULED IN THE FALL OF 1980. THEREFORE, IF THE MESSAGE FROM HAMBURG AND HANNOVER IS CLEARLY NEGATIVE FOR THE FEDERA COALITION AND IF THIS IS CONFIRMED BY THE ELECTIONS IN HESSE AND BAVARIA IN OCTOBER, THEN IN NOVEMBER, AT LEAST IN THE VIEW OF SOME RIGHT-WING MEMBERS OF THE FDP IN LOWER SAXONY, A NEW COALITION IN BONN MIGHT WELL BE FORMED AND MAKE KOHL CANCELLOR. AS ONE OF THESE PUT IT: "IN NOVEMBER BOTH DREGGER AND STRAUSS WILL PROBABLY BE GONE FROM THE BUNDESTAG AND WE CAN MAKE A DEAL WITH KOHL ON BETTER TERMS THAN WE COULD WITH CARSTENS OR DREGGER IN 1980, WHEN PERHAPS THEY WON'T EVEN NEED US. BESIDES, THIS WAY SCHEEL (FDP) WOULD BE SURE TO BE RE-ELECTED PRESIDENT IN 1979." KISELYAK

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